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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/FO, AF/S, AND AF/RSA:MAZEL, GRIESMER, DEES

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: LESOTHO: HOMOSEXUALITY NOT LEGISLATED, BUT CULTURAL TABOOS
REMAIN

REF: STATE 130765

¶1. Lesotho has no anti-gay specific laws on the books, nor is there any movement at the moment to introduce a bill in parliament that would make homosexuality illegal. There is a law against sodomy, but all cases so far have involved adults abusing children. There is no evidence that this law is currently being used in any way to target homosexuals.

¶2. General discrimination against homosexuals is not overtly present in the country. At the same time, homosexuality is taboo in Lesotho society. It is simply not talked about. There have been no reported cases of violence against homosexuals this year, nor any reports of active discrimination. Lesotho's small homosexual community has remained outside of the public eye and post contacts indicate that most of its members are not interested in any public advocacy at the moment.

¶3. The United Nations Development Programme is currently funding "Matrix," a support network for men having sex with men, women having sex with women, and transsexuals. The group is not identified as "for gays, lesbians, etc." because that is not how the members themselves identify one another. There has been difficulty getting this support network registered, and there is speculation that the reason for the delay is the sodomy law. UNDP contacts speculate that the government may be hesitant to register the group, because there might seem to be a contradiction between validating this group and the existing sodomy law.

¶4. The Matrix group will work on clarifying issues like the sodomy law. They will also serve as a lobbying group if new laws are drafted which would discriminate against the homosexual community. Finally, they will work in the area of HIV and AIDS. The homosexual community in Lesotho has very little in the way of AIDS programming on issues like prevention and counseling, and the Matrix group would fill that gap.

POWER